

## ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

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## Some of the Best Illinois High School Poetry of 1949

Selected by J. N. Hook  
University of Illinois

### FOREWORD

THE poems in this issue of the *Bulletin* are among the best of several hundred submitted for consideration. Others, equally good, had to be omitted because of lack of space. No doubt many more, written in classrooms around the state, would have merited inclusion had they been submitted. The editor hopes that still more teachers will send him poems written by their students during 1950. All contributions should be addressed to *Illinois English Bulletin*, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois. Each manuscript should bear the name of the author, his graduating class numeral, the name of his high school, and the name of his English teacher. No manuscripts will be returned unless they are accompanied by return postage.

Additional copies of this issue are available at twenty-five cents each for fewer than ten copies, twenty cents each in orders of ten or more mailed to one address, and fifteen cents each in orders of twenty or more mailed to one address. Teachers, in Illinois and other states, use these poems for class discussion.

**POETRY**

Poetry is the surging, lashing sea,  
Probing inquiring fingers  
At the impenetrable doorways of life,  
Trying at all times to expose  
The latches of our hearts.

Poetry is the urge to dive  
Into a bottomless pit  
But still be flying upward.  
It is the magical thoughts  
Of things unseen.

Poetry is a theme of life,  
A path to imagination beyond all forces.  
It is the putting of thoughts to rhythm  
When there is no other way  
To say them.

Poetry is not always a happening,  
Nor is it always make believe.  
Poetry is not a strange language.  
It is a tongue that all can understand  
If they but try.

—Group poem, sophomore class  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

**THE MOUNTAIN**

A lofty peak is a rugged isle,  
Above a sea of clouds;  
No mighty waves to pound  
Upon its barren shore;  
Only the wind for a tide,  
And only a snowy beach.

—JACK CHAMPION  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Ralph Potter, teacher

### CORN

Gently waving,  
A sound like taffeta,  
Our field of blue-green corn,  
Young and straight  
And fearless.

—CAROLYN CARLSON, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

### THE PATH

Through the woods  
The narrow path  
Is lighted by flashes of beauty.  
Gay flowers are singing  
Brightly colored petal songs beneath the trees.  
Tweeting bluebirds,  
Knocking woodpeckers,  
Whistling jays and copper-breasted robins  
Weave their wings  
In a riotous web of color.  
The fragile sky of eggshell blue,  
Feathered and tinted  
With small clouds of saffron  
And rosepink,  
Bends over the path  
Above the arched wings of the birds.  
Grass, rain washed and dew polished,  
Creeps toward the center  
Of the path.  
On either side  
Spiders stretch  
Their sparkling filaments  
From branch to branch,  
And a pale stream  
Slips silently by.

—DOLORES CHRISTOFFERSON, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

## SOLUTION?

I wonder in the icy stillness why  
The stars aloft are shining clear and calm,  
Perhaps because they have no earthly qualm  
And do not fear the darkness in their sky.

The deepened shadows hover and draw nigh  
To gather round me sweetly as a balm,  
Imparting all the soothing of a psalm  
That rests my puzzled brow and makes me sigh.

I'm sure the stars have seen me scan their light  
That tints the night with twinkling frosted dreams  
Which spiral through the night on wings of space.

One day I'll know why stars are burning bright;  
Why slivers of their light diffuse in beams  
And slip to earth to taunt me face to face.

—DOROTHY VAN DYKE, '50  
Cumberland Unit H. S., Greenup  
Gladys Wibking, teacher

## I HOPE I NEVER HEAR YOU SAY

So love is dead.  
"We might be friends,"  
You say instead.

'Twere best all ends,  
And when we meet  
Pass quickly by.  
Oh, speed your feet  
And so will I.

Stamp hard and leave no wayward spark  
To upset this placid dark—  
To flame and run a brighter red  
And burn the roof above our heads.

—PETER DEVRIES, '49  
Niles Twp. H. S., Skokie  
Priscilla Baker, teacher

**EMOTIONS**

Anger

is an evil  
demon which, rising up,  
strikes hard and quickly goes, but leaves  
its mark.

Hatreds

are foul monsters  
lying hidden in all  
minds; waiting, watching for a chance  
to strike.

Greed

is a great serpent  
ever creeping, coiling,  
enveloping anything  
in its path.

Joy

is a white song bird,  
flitting through hearts of all  
who recognize the many tunes  
it sings.

Love

is a flickering  
flame that from a roaring  
blaze may fall to a small coal which still  
lives on.

Faith

is a tide that ebbs  
and flows, rises and falls,  
but never entirely leaves  
our souls.

—GEORGE SMITH, '50  
Maine Twp. H. S., Park Ridge  
Elizabeth Paroline, teacher



**CHILD OF THE NIGHT**

Born in the dark,  
Reared in blackness,  
    I am a child of the night  
    Seeking some light.  
Born at midnight,  
Raised in the hours  
That follow,  
    I am a child of the night  
    Seeking the dawn.  
Born in the land  
Where the sun never shines,  
Raised in the light of moon,  
    I am a child of the night  
    Seeking the day.  
Born of this world,  
Raised by an electric bulb,  
    I am a child of the night  
    Seeking the truth.

—MARY BROWN, '49  
Visitation H. S., Chicago

**GAS STATION ATTENDANT**

From coast to coast the highway beckons him,  
As Maine and Texas cars keep flying past.  
He dreams of journeys to the world's bright rim—  
    "Ten gallons, regular, and make it fast!"

The day's work ends, to start again at dawn—  
And then his weary heart is lifted high  
As far above him soars an echelon  
Of wild geese flying south against the sky.

—JIM MILLER  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Ralph Potter, teacher

## MEMORIES

Memories

Are gentle fingers of the past  
Holding us for a moment  
Before we hurry on.

—GEORGE ANNE SCHULZ, '50  
De Kalb Twp. H. S.

## THE PROMISE

A cold and mute machine waits in the church.  
The parts of steel and wood are whispering to  
The silence of the night. They listen for  
A quiet voice to wake the sleeping pipes;  
They watch through darkness waiting for the hands  
Of one to touch the ivory keys. This huge  
Machine—a maze of wires connecting scores  
Or more of pegs—needs human warmth to thrill  
Its inmost parts with life . . .

Then only will

A Bach chorale reverberate inside  
The massive church.

—MARIAL JORGENSEN, '50  
J. Sterling Morton H. S., Cicero  
Marjorie Diez, teacher

## EDUCATION

The lamp  
The bending head  
The open book and rays of  
Light reflecting from the page—  
And thoughts—

—LOIS PRINCE, '50  
J. Sterling Morton H. S., Cicero  
Marjorie Diez, teacher

**THE BARREN FIELD**

How must the russet brown field feel  
When after winter's months of hushed expectancy  
The plowman deigns not seed to sow  
Upon its soil, which starts the field's most glorious task?

Suppressed and silent, it must lie  
With envy watching neighb'ring fields amassed in green;  
Must view the quivering, shaking blades  
Which hiss and mock, in boist'rous glee, its solitude.

It cannot sigh; it cannot speak;  
Its darkened face looks up to heaven's azure sky  
And waits for rain to give it tears  
So it can find a way to show its longfelt grief.

—MARIAN BERNTHAL  
Nashville Comm. H. S.  
Leona Strieker, teacher

**THE WILLOW TREE**

On the far horizon  
Shadowed by a cloud,  
Stood some stately cedars  
With their heads unbowed.  
But the poor willow tree  
Drooped and sulked alone  
And murmured to our Lord  
In a soft undertone:  
"Oh! If I could but be  
Like those other trees  
And stand erect all day,  
Everyone I'd please."  
Then God, looking downward,  
Said to the tree,  
"Why aren't you content  
Just to satisfy me?"

—BEVERLY BERTRAND, '50  
Canton High School  
Orpha Stutsman, teacher



### THE WIND

Tonight  
The wind is cold;  
It twists my hair around its icy fingers,  
Nestles about my neck,  
Afraid of being alone,  
This wind.

—JANIS SANDINE, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

### THE GREEN FIRE

I saw it yesterday in the bushes,  
The green fire,  
Marching, burning dimly,  
Like a fine mist.  
There's a smudge of green  
On the hill that is tilted toward the sun.

. . .

For God has set a torch to the earth,  
He is lighting the candles  
Of the earth,  
And the green fire is running.

—JANIE SHONTS, '50  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Ralph Potter, teacher

### FALLING LEAVES

The leaves do not mind at all  
That they must fall.  
Nature has a way  
To prepare new leaves next May.  
The leaves do not mind at all  
That they must fall.

—PAULA LEVINE  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Mary L. Taft, teacher

## SNOW

White,  
New and clean,  
Till a trudging man  
Smashes white peace with his dirty  
Galoshes.

—DOROTHY McCALLUM, '50  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Ralph Potter, teacher

## REJOICE, MY HEART!

They say He died . . .

And yet I speak His name in whispered prayer ;  
I only close my eyes to find Him there.  
His hands are cool and soothing on my head,  
But still they stay to tell me . . . He is dead.

They say He died . . .

The trees are stark, the earth is cold as death,—  
Then spring winds blow a warmth of perfumed breath,  
A robin sings, and poppies bloom blood-red ;  
And yet they stay to tell me . . . He is dead.

They say He died . . .

A Son of God, in suffering on a cross,  
And tell me of a sinning world's great loss,  
But still He comes to me, and loves, forgives.  
Rejoice, my heart, and sing . . . He lives! He lives!

—HELENE HUGHES  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

## ALONE

In a dim dreary house  
I live,  
On the shore  
Of the pounding ocean.  
Here I was born—  
It seems thousands of years ago.  
Here I learned to speak  
And think  
And  
    cry.

My happiest moments come  
As I walk along the shore,  
Climb to the top  
Of the cliff  
And sit beside the twisted tree,  
Watching  
Gigantic waves  
Far  
    below.

Often I wish  
For someone beside me  
To tell of the outside world  
Which I have never known.  
In return  
I would share  
My own little universe  
Of deep turbulent waters,  
Stark lonely cliffs,  
And  
    quiet  
        skies.

My wish  
Has never been granted.  
I am content  
With the quiet solitude  
About  
    me.

Alone—  
I climb to the top  
Of the cliff,  
Watching  
and  
waiting.

—JEANNETTE GUSTAFSON, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

### THE DEPARTURE

Sleep turned the knob  
And tiptoed in  
To kiss the child's  
Soft, dimpled chin.

The baby stirred;  
Sleep took his hand  
And led him off  
To slumberland.

—BARBARA VETTE, '50  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Mary L. Taft, teacher

### TARDY?

He took his fish pole,  
His baited hook,  
Tripped lightly away  
Toward the bubbling brook.  
He dropped his line  
Into the water cool,  
Then faltered, weakened,  
And ran off to school.

—JOHN HOF, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

**REVELATION OF QUIET**

Rest! Rest!

Soft as the evening's call  
When sun's last rays  
Slip silently over the horizon,  
A cool, calm darkness  
Spreads stealthily over the sphere  
Like a blanket enfolding nature.  
Slowly the music of sleep  
Soothingly drifts through space,  
Beckoning you—  
Come, join the cool, calm darkness  
And rest serenely—  
Sleep! Sleep!

—MARY HELEN POTTER, '49  
Jacksonville High School  
Emma Mae Leonhard, teacher

**DEATH: TWO VIEWS**

Death can  
Be a thrashing  
Whirlpool, greedy, mighty,  
Pulling all into its crushing  
Vortex.

And yet  
Death may  
Be a placid  
Billow, gentle, smooth,  
Inviting some to sail their boats  
Beyond.

—LARRY FOX, '51  
Maine Twp. H. S., Park Ridge  
Paulene M. Yates, teacher



**THE TRANSIENT**

Trying to take hold of happiness  
Is like trying to get a moonbeam from the sky,  
Or like grabbing hazy smoke from the delicate air.  
The moonbeam shifts from place to place,  
The smoke seeps from my grasp—  
Thus happiness.

—LAURA OHLEN  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

**THE CLOCK**

Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
Life's a clock, life's a clock,  
Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
Ever throbbing, never stopping,  
Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
When it stumbles  
Wrought by weakness,  
Then the key  
Rebuilds its power;  
So a word of praise elates us,  
Sending us to greater conquests.  
Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
Complicated, moving, surging,  
All relentless, restless whirlpool,  
Intricate in complex structure,  
Turning, beating, constant motion,  
Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
As the years grow hard upon us,  
As our bones grow stiff and weary,  
So its gears grow old, neglected,  
And its wheels grow thin from usage;  
Only then is peace eternal,  
Only then the soul's releasing,  
Then it stops, then it stops.

—ELLEN DEMOE, '49  
Evanston Twp. H. S.  
Ralph Potter, teacher

### PURGATORY

The stench of putrid flesh,  
The moan of torn repentant souls;  
The realm of the Tempter behind—  
That of the Savior ahead.  
The tedious decades of pain and toil,  
A hope to be unfettered, remunerated  
In the eyes of the highest,  
Days without end, hours without minutes,  
Endless time of bondage!  
Until the day, the hour, the moment  
The evils are obviated from the soul,  
Then unction and flight into the  
Arbor of bountiful fruit.

—DOYLE GOFFINET, '50  
Du Quoin Twp. H. S.  
P. J. Notaras, teacher

### CHROMATISM

Upon a hill adorned in gowns of blue,  
With tints as pale in hue as skies above,  
My angels dance toward heaven's rendezvous,  
Their azure wings winnowing with grace and love.  
If clothed in maize, they would be much too bright,  
In gray, too cold, in black, too sad to see;  
Vermilion is too bold, and white, too light,  
While green is known for showing jealousy.  
The color brown is drab as barren land,  
Inadequate for these sweet dancing hours;  
The pink of shells and snails that lie on sand  
Is delicate, but suited best to flowers.  
My visions seen are gowned in shades God's own,  
And thus they dance from hills to heaven unknown.

—MARJORIE HOGER  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

## THE STORM

(A dramatic summary of "La Traviata" or "The Lost One")

Oh, magic strains, that drown the soul in chorus richness,  
Thy sounds plague my memory—haunting lines that challenge  
Old desires long buried in the grave of time.

How that mem'ry beats upon my brain and  
Tortures every hard-forgotten longing.  
Even though the tones that, like the beauty of a  
Bleeding ruby, warm and feverous, strike a  
Bell somewhere within, a vibrant pang shakes the  
Painful recollection of a happiness gone—  
Spent, dead.

Fade away, oh fade away, if mercy is God's child, fade away.  
The body physical must suffer, but to an end;  
The immortal soul must live!

The sweet music passes and all is still.

—ARMIN WATKINS, '49  
Niles Twp. H. S., Skokie  
Priscilla Baker, teacher

## MODERN ART

A mass of colorful whorls,  
Of contour lines,  
Sweeping and graceful  
As a swallow in flight,  
Darting about the canvas,  
Twisting and turning  
A carnival of colors.

Separated from this scene of gayety  
By jagged flashing lines,  
A sullen, darkened portrait  
Of someone's broken soul,  
A green-faced man,  
Eyes glazed,  
The shadow of death.

More jagged lines of blazing brilliance,  
An explosion of flowers,  
More color,  
The scene of death forgotten,  
Sorrow drowned out by joy,  
A cycle of happiness and sorrow,  
Birth and death,  
Life itself.

—JOHN HOAGLUND, '51  
East H. S., Rockford  
Adele Johnson, teacher

### PERSECUTION

My throat is parched,  
My lips are dry,  
I am in pain.  
I want to cry,  
My Lord, my Lord, look down and see  
What algebra has done to me.

—MARGIE KOONEY, '52  
Visitation High School, Chicago

### JUNIOR MISS

Blessings on thee, little girl,  
Laughing lass with windblown curl,  
With thy rolled-up old blue jeans  
(Trademark of the early teens),  
With thy red lip, redder yet  
(You've got lipstick on, I'll bet!)  
With the powder on thy nose,  
You're as pretty as a rose.  
From my heart I give thee glee—  
You might easily be me!

(With apologies to John Greenleaf Whittier)

—BETTY LOU PLETCHER, '49  
J. Sterling Morton H. S., Cicero  
H. Irene Pauley, teacher

## RHYMES OF A YOUNG SEAMSTRESS

(With apologies to Coleridge)

The thread was here, the thimble there,  
Of pins I needed more.  
The cloth of red hid the bed;  
The patterns hid the floor.

My heart was down, my temper up,  
I tore my hair and wept:  
"The tape is lost, the hooks are gone,  
The snaps I have not kept.

"I cut the blouse, I cut the sleeves,  
I cut the skirt (the front),  
But, woe is me! The cloth is gone,  
For more I have to hunt.

"I cut the belt, I cut the cuffs,  
The facings I don't lack,  
But, woe is me! I cannot wear  
A skirt without a back.

"Oh help me, pretty Mother kind!  
From the fiends that plague me so.  
A dark red dress without a back  
Cannot be worn, you know."

She kindly tried to help me fix  
What could not fixed be.  
A skirt cannot be made without  
A lot of cloth, you see.

*Moral:*

She seweth best who readeth best  
Directions great and small.  
It does not pay to cut the dress  
Till you have read them all.

—ONA TINS, '49  
Palatine Twp. H. S.  
Verna E. Jumps, teacher



## LIMERICKS

There was a young boy named Cy,  
A senior at Calumet High;  
Cy liked to fly  
Paper airplanes by  
Until he was expelled from Cal High.

—JEAN HINMAN  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

I knew a young lady from Worcester  
Who wasn't quite bright, for she uorchester  
Go traveling to Greenwich  
In search of pink speenwich;  
She had no more sense than a rorchester.

—BARBARA ANDERSON  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

There once was a goat named Billy,  
Who, when he saw food, became silly,—  
Cucumbers and cream  
Gave him a long dream  
Of pink tigers that was really a dilly.

—JAMES FLEISCHER  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

There was a young lady from Gratz,  
Who was fond of Parisian hats,  
But when she got old,  
And had no more gold,  
She made them from Papa's cravats.

—DONNA PAUL, '52  
Comm. H. S., Shannon  
Ruby Walker, teacher

LINES WRITTEN AFTER MISPRONOUNCING  
"BOUQUET"

or

BOO TO YOU (FROM YOU KNOW WHO)

A slight correction by Miss Drolsom  
Showed me that English really stole some  
Pronunciation from the French, who  
Express their "bō-quet" with a "boo."

And everybody in the know  
Remembers that it isn't "bō—"   
But then there are the others who  
Forget to remember that it's "boo."

Your other abilities count nil,  
And though it is a bitter pill,  
All honors go to those few who  
Pronounce their nosegay with a "boo."

—JANET STEARN  
Calumet H. S., Chicago  
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

JUST MEDIOCRE

There's an itching in my fingers  
As they clasp around a pen,  
And an urge for self-expression  
To come out the other end.

I long to write with fervor  
Some glorious masterpiece  
That will make the endless ages  
Sigh in rapturous peace.

Oh I would be a Shakespeare,  
A Wordsworth, and a Poe,  
And endlessly the verses  
From out my pen would flow.

But, alas, I am not gifted,  
Nor with inspiration blessed,  
So my readers must be satisfied  
With an average poem like this.

—JOANNE ST. AUBIN, '49  
Thornton Twp. H. S., Harvey  
Helen Daly, teacher

### HAPPIEST OF DAYS

The rain came down  
A-dripping, dripping, dripping.  
It went down my back steps  
A-skipping, skipping, skipping.  
It ran along the gutter  
A-slipping, slipping, slipping,  
A-dripping, skipping, slipping  
So merrily on its way.

The sun shone down  
A-beaming, beaming, beaming.  
It shone on my back steps;  
Its warmth set me to dreaming.  
It shone upon the gutter  
And set the puddles steaming,  
A-beaming, dreaming, steaming  
So happily all the day.

A lad came down  
A-singing, singing, singing.  
He sat on my back steps;  
He set my brain to ringing.  
He went; my heart went with him  
A-springing, springing, springing  
A-singing, ringing, springing  
So merrily on its way.

—JOANNE CRABTREE, '49  
Palatine Twp. H. S.  
Verna E. Jumps, teacher

## THE PENCIL

A pencil lying on a desk  
Is just a pencil—  
A long piece of graphite  
Covered with wood,  
And a little ball of rubber at the end.  
But a pencil in a hand, ah-h-h,  
There you have an instrument  
That may create  
The greatest piece of art on earth.  
What a pencil is  
Is not determined by the pencil itself,  
But by you.

—DONNA JEAN KETELBOETER  
Thornton Twp. H. S., Harvey  
Helen Daly, teacher





